AMENDMENTS TO THE DRAWINGS:

The attached sheet of drawings includes changes to Figure 2. This sheet, which includes Figure 2, replaces the original sheet including Figure 2. In Figure 2, reference characters are added for the first end 12a and the second end 12b of the strap 12.

Attachment: Replacement Sheet

REMARKS

Claims 1-20 remain in the application. The application has been amended and is believed to be in condition for allowance.

Amendments to the Disclosure

Claims 1 and 2 are amended to further distinguish the invention over the prior art.

Claim 1 is amended to recite that the tongue 10 is mounted on an outside surface of the strap 12 such that the strap is sandwiched between the tongue 10 and the tubular body 2.

Claim 2 is amended to recite the locking means 24, 26 being provided between the strap 12 and the tubular body 2.

The foregoing amendments find support in the specification and the drawing figures as originally filed (e.g., Figure 2; page 4, third full paragraph).

The claims are further amended to address antecedent basis issues and formal issues in consideration of U.S. practice and preferences. A "clean" listing of the claims, with editing markings removed, is provided in the appendix for the Examiner's convenience.

In addition, the specification is amended to address typographical issues on pages 4 and 6, and Figure 2 is amended to include reference characters 12a and 12b described on page 4.

None of the amendments set forth above introduce new matter.

Substantive Issues - Section 102

The Official Action rejected claims 1-20 under 35 USC 102(b) as being anticipated by Storz (US 5,386,650; "STORZ").

In response, it is firstly noted that claims 1 and 2 have been amended as indicated above. It is respectfully submitted that STORZ does not anticipate claim 1 as amended.

For example, it is respectfully submitted that STORZ fails to teach or suggest a limb protection assembly with a tongue mounted on an outside surface of the strap such that the tongue slides freely and such that the strap is sandwiched between the tongue and the tubular body, as required by amended claim 1.

On the contrary, STORZ Figures 1 and 2 clearly teach a ski boot wherein the strap 12, 41, 42 is provided on an outside of the tongue or front flap 5 (see also Figure 12, wherein the strap 145, 146 are clearly on the outside of the front flap).

In contrast, the present invention requires the strap being between the tongue and the tubular body (see, e.g., element 12 being between elements 10b, and 2 in Figure 2 of the application).

Hence, for at least the foregoing reasons, STORZ fails to anticipate the invention as recited in amended claim 1.

It is therefore respectfully submitted that amended claim 1 is patentable over STORZ.

It is further respectfully submitted that claims depending from claim 1 are patentable at least for depending from a patentable parent claim.

For example, neither the drawing figures nor the specification of STORZ teaches or suggests a limb protection assembly with a locking means 24, 26 provided between the strap 12 and the tubular body 2, as required by amended claim 2 (see, e.g., application Figure 2).

On the contrary, STORZ makes no teaching of any locking means except on the outside of the boot (e.g., Figures 1, 2, 12). Hence, claim 2 is patentable in its own right in addition to being dependent from claim 1.

Reconsideration and allowance of the claims are respectfully requested.

From the foregoing, it will be apparent that Applicants have fully responded to the July 7, 2009 Official Action and that the claims as presented are patentable. In view of this, Applicants respectfully request reconsideration of the claims, as presented, and their early passage to issue.

In order to expedite the prosecution of this case, the Examiner is invited to telephone the attorney for Applicants at the number set forth below if the Examiner is of the opinion that further discussion of this case would be helpful in advancing prosecution.

The Commissioner is hereby authorized in this, concurrent, and future replies, to charge payment or credit any overpayment to Deposit Account No. 25-0120 for any additional fees required under 37 C.F.R. § 1.16 or under 37 C.F.R. § 1.17.

Respectfully submitted,

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JGM/jr

APPENDIX:

The Appendix includes the following item(s):

☒ - a "clean" listing of the amended claims

☒ - a Replacement Sheet for Figure 2 of the drawings

CLEAN LISTING OF THE AMENDED CLAIMS:

This listing of the claims amended as above is provided without change markings for the Examiner's convenience:

1. (currently amended) A limb protection assembly, comprising:

a substantially tubular body (2) extending in a longitudinal direction (6) to be adjusted around said limb, having an aperture (8) extending in the longitudinal direction, the aperture having a first edge on a first side of the aperture and a second edge on a second side of the aperture opposite the first side to form a spacing between the first and second edges;

a rigid tongue (10) extending from a first side to a second side of said aperture to cover a front portion (22) of the tubular body; and

a strap (12) extending transversely to the longitudinal direction and between the first and second edges of the aperture, said strap being connectable to the tubular body at the first side and the second side of the aperture in an adjustable manner in order to adjust the spacing between the edges of the aperture,

wherein said tongue is mounted on an outside surface of the strap such that the tongue slides freely and such that the strap is sandwiched between the tongue and the tubular body, and

wherein the tongue and the tubular body co-operate together to automatically centre the tongue relative to the aperture.

2. (currently amended) The assembly according to claim 1, further comprising:

locking means (24, 26) provided between the strap and the tubular body,

wherein the locking means are configured to occupy an inactive position in which the locking means allow the tongue to slide freely on the strap, and an active position in which the locking means act counter to said sliding, and

wherein the locking means are placed in the active position when the tongue is pressed against said front portion.

3. (currently amended) The assembly according to claim 2, wherein the locking means comprise grooves (24) provided in the strap, and a catch (26) having a shape configured to complement a shape of the grooves in order to engage therein, said catch resiliently assuming the inactive position in the absence of any external force and forming a protrusion relative to said tongue in a direction of said front portion when the catch is in the inactive position.

4. (currently amended) The assembly according to claim 3, wherein the catch is produced by moulding with the tongue.

5. (currently amended) The assembly according to claim 1,

wherein the front portion has a non-circular cross-section, and

wherein said tongue has a cross-sectional shape complementary to a cross-sectional shape of the front portion.

6. (currently amended) The assembly according to claim 5, wherein said front portion has a substantially parabolic cross-section.

7. (currently amended) The assembly according to claim 1, wherein the tongue comprises first and second plastic components (10a, 10b) assembled together, the second plastic component (10b) provided on the outside surface of the strap (12), and the first plastic component (10a) connected to the second plastic component (10b).

8. (currently amended) The assembly according to claim 1, wherein the tubular body is formed by a rigid boot shell.

9. (currently amended) The assembly according to claim 1, further comprising:

at least a second strap (12).

10. (currently amended) The assembly according to claim 2,

wherein the front portion has a non-circular cross-section, and

wherein said tongue has a cross-sectional shape complementary to a cross-sectional shape of the front portion.

11. (currently amended) The assembly according to claim 3,

wherein the front portion has a non-circular cross-section, and

wherein said tongue has a cross-sectional shape complementary to a cross-sectional shape of the front portion.

12. (currently amended) The assembly according to claim 4,

wherein the front portion has a non-circular cross-section, and

wherein said tongue has a cross-sectional shape complementary to a cross-sectional shape of the front portion.

13. (currently amended) The assembly according to claim 2, wherein the tongue comprises first and second plastic components (10a, 10b) assembled together, the second plastic component (10b) provided on the outside surface of the strap (12), and the first plastic component (10a) connected to the second plastic component (10b).

14. (currently amended) The assembly according to claim 3, wherein the tongue comprises first and second plastic components (10a, 10b) assembled together, the second plastic component (10b) provided on the outside surface of the strap (12), and the first plastic component (10a) connected to the second plastic component (10b).

15. (currently amended) The assembly according to claim 4, wherein the tongue comprises first and second plastic components (10a, 10b) assembled together, the second plastic component (10b) provided on the outside surface of the strap (12), and the first plastic component (10a) connected to the second plastic component (10b).

16. (currently amended) The assembly according to claim 5, wherein the tongue comprises first and second plastic components (10a, 10b) assembled together, the second plastic component (10b) provided on the outside surface of the strap

(12), and the first plastic component (10a) connected to the second plastic component (10b).

17. (currently amended) The assembly according to claim 6, wherein the tongue comprises first and second plastic components (10a, 10b) assembled together, the second plastic component (10b) provided on the outside surface of the strap (12), and the first plastic component (10a) connected to the second plastic component (10b).

18. (currently amended) The assembly according to claim 2, wherein the tubular body is formed by a rigid boot shell.

19. (currently amended) The assembly according to claim 3, wherein the tubular body is formed by a rigid boot shell.

20. (currently amended) The assembly according to claim 4, wherein the tubular body is formed by a rigid boot shell.